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Avalanche Notes

INT FOREST & RANGE
EXPERIMENT STATION

FEB 11 1986

U.S. Forest Service
Westwide Avalanche Network

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DECEMBER 1985

A major (and lasting) weather pattern change in the second week of December turned the month into a Jekyll and Hyde act. Early December brought a continuation of the snowy November weather, but then the long-wave pattern shifted and established an impenetrable ridge over the West. The result? A severe constriction of the snow spigot.

No snow at all fell in the Cascades from the 9th to 29th; in the Sierra from the 12th to 29th; at Sun Valley, ID from the 10th to 31st; in Utah from the 11th to 29th; in central and southern Colorado from the 15th to 29th; and at Taos, NM from the 14th to 30th.

Snowfalls expressed as a percent of December normals were: in Alaska -- Alyeska, 47%; in the Cascades -- Mt. Hood Meadows, OR, 49%; Stevens Pass, WA, 36%; Mt. Rainier, WA, 31%; and Crystal Mtn., WA, 24%; in the Sierra -- Alpine Meadows, CA 33%; and Squaw Valley, CA, 15%; in the Intermountain region -- Sun Valley, 30%; and Bridger Bowl, MT, 24%; in Colorado -- Berthoud Pass, 108%; Gothic, 104%; Breckenridge, 96%; Sunlight, 94%; Copper Mtn., 89%; Monarch, 81%; Crested Butte, 79%; Winter Park, 79%; Wolf Creek, 62%; Vail, 58%; and Aspen Mtn., 43%.

Avalanche activity, not unexpectedly, was on the light side in December. Eight reported events caught patrollers or lift skiers. On the 7th, a skier was injured at Big Mtn., MT; and on the 31st, a patroller at Aspen Mtn. was totally buried and suffered a slight injury when caught in a small, loose-snow slide. The worst incident, however, happened at Jackson Hole, WY on the 2nd, before the area had begun its season. Six patrollers were setting up a sign line in Rendezvous Bowl when Dean's Slide pulled out above them in a 5-foot-deep hard slab. (This slope had been hit with two hand charges earlier in the day, with no avalanche release.) All six were caught, but the man lowest on the slope was buried 6 feet deep. Although the survivors located the victim's burial position with beacons, they had only one shovel among them. Other rescuers soon arrived, but it was 40 minutes before the victim was uncovered. Resuscitation failed; he had died of suffocation. This was the first avalanche death at Jackson Hole in 21 years of operation.

Through December, avalanches have caught 30 people, wholly or partly buried 21, injured 4, and killed 7. Three vehicles have been caught, and one damaged.

(Note: Tabulated data for November is included with this summary. Please attach to your November narrative.)

DECEMBER 1985

CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN ROCKY MOUNTAINS										TEMPERATURE										WIND SPEED AND DIRECTION																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																
AREA	TOTAL SNOW-FALL IN.	MAX IN 24 HR.	DAYS	TOTAL WATER IN.	MAX IN 24 HR.	DAYS	NUMBER OF DAYS	MEAN MAX DEGREES F	MEAN MIN DEGREES F	AVG	AVG FOR MO.	6 HOUR PERIODS	FASTEST HOUR	DAYS	TEMPERATURE										WIND SPEED AND DIRECTION																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																											
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DECEMBER 1985
AVALANCHE SUMMARY

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--=DATA INCOMPLETE OR MISSING
G=GREATER THAN OR EQUAL TO
V=ALSO OCCURRED ON OTHER DATES

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NOVEMBER 1985
AVALANCHE SUMMARY[illegible]

U.S. FOREST SERVICE
ALPINE SNOW AND AVALANCHE RESEARCH PROJECT
RM STATION FORT COLLINS, COLO.

NOVEMBER 1985

SUMMARY OF WEATHER AND SNOW CONDITIONS

AREA	SNOWFALL			WATER EQUIVALENT			SNOW DEPTH			TEMPERATURE			WIND SPEED AND DIRECTION		
	TOTAL SNOWFALL IN.	MAX IN.	AVG DEN	TOTAL WATER IN.	MAX IN.	DAYS OF GE	MAX IN.	MIN IN.	AVG IN.	MAX DEGREES F	MIN DEGREES F	AVG	6 HOUR PERIODS GE	HOUR GE	FASTEST HOUR MPH DIR.
CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN ROCKY MOUNTAINS															
BERTHOUD PASS, COLO	72.1	08 23	9	5.58	1.60	9 13 6 4 1	37 10	10	26	25.4	8.8	17.1	68M 34M	53	320 23
BERTHOUD MOUNTAIN, COLO	65.9	07 10	10	4.91	.85	10 14 8 3 0	40 26	17	30	26.1	13.6	19.3	90M 71M	45	320 24
COPPER MOUNTAIN, COLO	51.5	07 12	9	8.90	1.45	30 17 13 6 2	57 30	0	17	29.8	10.8	20.3	75M 43M	---	---
GOTHIC, COLO	116.4	08 17	30	5.37	1.70	9 14 11 2 0	34 18	0	18	31.1	16.2	23.7	---	---	---
MARVINE RANCH, COLO	78.0	07 18	9	3.67	1.40	8 15 8 0 0	27 30	0	11	25.4	15.6	26.9	---	---	---
MONARCH, COLO	53.3	07 16	8	4.24	1.02	9 13 8 3 1	47 30	5	27	31.3	12.8	19.1	106M 68M	55	250 22
SUNLIGHT, COLO	116.0	07 24	9	---	---	---	22 30	17	50	28.7M	11.6M	21.5M	---	---	---
WINTER PARK, COLO	55.6	08 14	9	---	---	---	104 30	---	---	---	12.3M	20.5M	---	---	---
WOLF CREEK, COLO	164.0	08 24	18	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
INTERMOUNTAIN															
BRIDGER BOWL, MONT	33.5	07 8	18	2.86	1.45	2 15 5 0 0	20 18	1	12	23.9M	7.4M	15.7M	---	---	---
SNOWBIRD, UTAH	117.5	08 22	12	9.83	1.85	13 17 13 7 1	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
TETON PASS, WYO 22	31.5	07 20	25	5.80	1.35	25 14 10 4 1	---	---	---	15.0M	6.1M	10.6M	---	---	---
WEST COAST															
ALPINE MEADOWS, CAL	103.5	13 16	10	13.36	2.24	29 12 10 8 7	48 30	0	15	---	---	---	---	---	---
ALYESKA, ALASKA	21.3	09 17	26	2.04	1.68	26 16 4 2 0	25 27	12	15	23.3	14.5	18.9	2	0	23 100 26
MT. RAINIER, PARADISE	119.2	09 19	22	18.50	1.87	21 20 18 5 2	94 30	11	40	28.5M	12.4M	19.4M	87	62	67 230 9
SQUAW VALLEY, CALIF	60.3	11 24	10	8.86	2.58	10 10 8 5 2	32 30	0	13	39.6M	18.4M	29.0M	20.3	---	---

-- DATA INCOMPLETE OR MISSING
M-- ONE OR MORE DAYS OF RECORD MISSING-IF AVERAGE VALUE IS ENTERED, LESS THAN 10 DAYS RECORD IS MISSING
GE-- GREATER THAN OR EQUAL TO
IF M IS ENTERED IN WIND SPEED COLUMN, LESS THAN 37 6-HOUR PERIODS ARE MISSING